

# West Coast Blue Penguin Census July / August 2010

## Summary of results



The annual little blue penguin (*Korora* – *Eudyptla minor*) census, organised by the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust, took place in late July and early August this year. 34 hardy volunteers, including 13 from the Hokitika scouts, braved the cold and the early morning, to walk the beaches counting penguin prints.

A big thank you to all who contributed. While not scientific, these annual surveys provide valuable year on year information about the scattered penguin populations along this significant stretch of coastline. The information compliments the Trust's detailed colony monitoring taking place in Charleston and Punakaiki, as well as monitoring being done in conjunction with DOC at Okarito and Hari Hari.

## Summary of results – North to South

Where multiple surveys were done along the same length of coastline, the highest number of prints are listed.

### **Buller**

The northern most stretch of beach covered this year was Mokihiui to Mussel Rocks but no prints were found. None were found from Mussel Rocks to Ngakawau River but one set of prints was seen a few weeks earlier. Last year six prints were found on Ngakawau beach, locals believe there has been a decline in penguin numbers along this stretch of coast.

The Buller river to north tip head also showed no penguin activity, locals say the sea has devastated this area.

A number of locals were involved in the Carters beach census. Eight tracks were counted from Bradshaws Rd to Bulls Creek, Western Tip Head 150m to Cape Foulwind revealed 15, and ten were counted Thomas Creek to the camping ground. This was slightly up on last year.

At the Nile River only one set of prints was counted, however in the evening five to six penguins were heard.

At Whitehorse, West Coast Blue Penguin Trust ranger Reuben Lane found only 7 prints but a subsequent search of this area revealed a significant new colony with between 30 and 40 breeding burrows.

No penguin prints were found at Woodpecker Bay (south of Fox River mouth) because of extremely bad weather, last year seven prints were found which was significantly down on previous years. There was no activity found in the northern Barrytown flats.

Five prints were found at Trumans beach north of Punakaiki.

## **Grey district**

No prints were found at Cobden, there are burrows in this area but some have been removed during earthworks.

From Karoro to Paroa 28 prints were found, and 59 were counted between Pandoro Ave and Taramakau. These numbers are well down on last year when 140 prints were found. Erosion is thought to be one reason, it is getting very bad along this stretch of coast and nesting boxes have had to be moved.

## **Westland District**

At Awatuna 37 tracks were recorded. This is a similar number to last year.

Locals and the scouts surveyed the beaches north of Hokitika. From Arahura to Kaihinu Beach access 12 prints were counted. Between Kaihinu beach access and Hou Hou Creek there were 40 tracks, and from Silver Fern Farms and Revell Street 21 tracks were recorded. These numbers are well up on last year so there seems to be a sizeable and growing colony at Hokitika. The scouts reported cows trampling the dune area in front of the sewage ponds, discussion with Westland District Council has resulted in a new fence being erected. Locals also report a lot of activity by 4WD's and roaming dogs on the northern Hokitika beaches which is worrying but more signage is due to go up soon.

At Saltwater Lagoon, near Hari Hari, six tracks were recorded and one penguin was seen at the waters edge around 8pm.

South of Okarito 36 penguin tracks were counted at 3 Mile beach, 26 were recorded at 5 Mile beach.

At Haast beach 7 tracks were found, the surveyor recorded many threats to penguins including quad bikes, cattle and dogs.

***Thanks again for your valuable contribution. Please feel free to contact the Trust at [info@bluepenguin.org.nz](mailto:info@bluepenguin.org.nz)***